

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 04929 160622Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
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INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 4929

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, PBOR, ET, SO
SUBJECT: WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS VISIT EASTERN FRONT

REF: ADDIS ABABA 4888 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: FOUR WESTERN COREESPONDENTS (NY TIMES, WASHINGTON
POST STRINGER FROM NAIROBI, LONDON FINANCIAL TIMES, AND
ITALIAN COMMUNIST PAPER UNITA) GIVEN TOUR OF DIRE DAWA AND
JIJIGA AREAS AUGUST 13-14 BY PROVISIONAL MILITARY ADMINIS-
TRATIVE COUNCIL (PMAC) MEMBER MAJ FISSEHA DESTA IN APPAR-
ENT EFFORT TO PROVE CONVINCINGLY INVOLVEMENT OF REGULAR
SOMALI TROOPS IN OGADEN FIGHTING. CORRESPONDENTS SHOWN
CAPTURED SOVIET AND CZECH WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION WITH SOMALI
MARKINGS, MIG SHOT DOWN IN JIJIGA AREA, AND INTERVIEWED
TWO CAPTURED, ALLEGEDLY SOMALI SOLDIERS. END SUMMARY.
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 04929 160622Z

1. EMBOFF SPOKE WITH NAIROBI-BASED NY TIMES CORRES-
PONDENT MICHAEL KAUFMAN UPON HIS RETURN FROM PMAC CON-
DUCTED TOUR OF DIRE DAWA AND JIJIGA AREAS AUGUST 13.
ALTHOUGH ONE-DAY TOUR CAREFULLY CONTROLLED, KAUFMAN
IMPRESSED BY FRANKNESS ON PART ETHIOPIANS AND POINTED
ABSENCE OF RESIDENT EASTERN BLOC CORRESPONDENTS.

KAUFMAN STATED 4 JOURNALISTS FLOWN TO DIRE DAWA WHERE AIRFIELD APPARENTLY UNDAMAGED, AT LEAST 3 F-5S BASED, AND TOWN ITSELF CALM. ALTHOUGH DENIED ACCESS TO WOUNDED ETHIOPIANS, CORRESPONDENTS SHOWN CAPTURED SOVIET AND CZECH WEAPONS, INCLUDING RPGS, MORTARS, AND ROCKET LAUNCHERS, AS WELL AS AMMUNITION CRATES WITH SOMALI MARKINGS. ETHIOPIANS ALLEGED MUNITIONS ARRIVING FROM SOMALIA PIECEMEAL BY CAMEL AND TRUCK AND BEING STOCKPILED AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS OUTSIDE DIRE DAWA. JOURNALISTS ALSO INTERVIEWED TWO CAPTURED SOLDIERS THERE, WHO ASSERTED THEY WERE REGULARS FROM SOMALI ARMY. SOLDIERS ADMITTED RECEIVING ENTHUSIASTIC SEND-OFF IN HARGEISA BY SOMALI MINDEF LT. GEN. SAMANTAR AND HAVING BEEN IN ETHIOPIA 4-6 WEEKS.

2. JOURNALISTS THEN FLOWN BY HELICOPTER TO JIJIGA WHERE THEY SHOWN ETHIOPIAN DC-3 STILL SMOLDERING ON RUNWAY AND DOWNED MIG JET (NOT FURTHER DESIGNATED BY NUMBER) 5-6 KMS. FURTHER AWAY WITH CLEARLY IDENTIFIABLE SOMALI MARKINGS. ETHIOPIANS EXPLAINED SOMALI MIG HAD STRAFED DC-3 AND THEN WAS HIT BY ETHIOPIAN GROUND FIRE. JOURNALISTS ALSO TOLD SOMALI AND ETHIOPIAN TANKS FACING EACH OTHER 60 KMS. SOUTH OF JIJIGA, BUT HAD NOT YET BEGUN CONFRONTATION. CORRESPONDENTS DENIED ACCESS TO HARRAR WHERE IT BELIEVED HEAVY FIGHTING OCCURRING IN VICINITY AT PRESENT. THROUGHOUT TOUR, KAUFMAN SENSED ETHIOPIANS WERE ADOPTING CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE TO-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ADDIS 04929 160622Z

WARD U.S. AND HOPED U.S. WOULD PROVIDE SPARE PARTS FOR PLANES, "EVEN IF IT THROUGH ISRAELIS," ONE SOURCE SAID. HE ALSO NOTED ETHIOPIAN REALIZATION THAT SITUATION GRAVE.

3. COMMENT: IF ETHIOPIAN AIM OF WESTERN JOURNALISTS' TOUR WAS TO DEMONSTRATE REGULAR SOMALI ARMED FORCES INVOLVEMENT IN OGADEN FIGHTING, IT APPEARS GOAL WAS SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED SINCE KAUFMAN DEFINITELY CONVINCED SOMALIA AND SOMALI REGULARS HEAVILY COMMITTED TO CAMPAIGN TO CAPTURE OGADEN. EXCLUSION OF EASTERN BLOC CORRESPONDENTS WAS INTERESTING. EITHER EPMG ASSUMED THAT THEIR COVERAGE WOULD DO LITTLE TO DOCUMENT ETHIOPIA'S CASE BEFORE WORLD, OR PEMG DECIDED NOT TO PLACE THEM IN POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING POSITION BY HAVING TO CHOOSE SIDES IN ALL-SOCIALIST SCRAP, OR EPMG DECIDED THAT WHEN CHIPS DOWN, MUCH-MALIGNED WESTERN PRESS STILL HAD GREATER CREDIBILITY WHEN IT COUNTED. ETHIOPIAN CORRESPONDENTS DID GO ALONG, INTERVIEWED WESTERN JOURNALISTS THEMSELVES, AND FILMED THEIR ACTIVITIES.

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Message Attributes

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